

DAGITI KAKADWA: UNVEILING THE REALITIES IN THE LIVES OF NEW PEOPLE'S ARMY IN JONES, ISABELA

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Abstract

The Maoist-inspired Communist Party of the Philippines marks a long history of violence, terror, and instability in the archipelago causing thousands of casualties among Government troops, insurgents, and including civilians but the numbers themselves say little about why and where the group continues to endure until today, thus, the core of this qualitative study is knowing the realities in the lives of the NPA's in Jones, Isabela. The researcher utilized the phenomenological method as a strategy of inquiry in this qualitative study. The purposive sampling method was the sampling technique used wherein, 5 NPA from Jones were the participants using a self-designed questionnaire as the data gathering tool. Findings were derived through Nvivo. Results revealed that the NPA's are prepared for any life-threatening instances, conditioned to the idea of liberty-deprivation and the possibility of losing a life. Additionally, despite their distressful experiences against the government, they don't receive resentment from the community, more so, these communist exhibits the remarkable value of heroism that despite not gaining anything in return for their sacrifices, they continue to uphold their ideologies and aspirations. Lastly, the New People's Army of Jones Isabela still stands on the pillar of their organization from which it has originated.

Keywords: Advocacy, Life experiences, New People's Army

1. Introduction

The communist threat is considered the most potent threat in the government (Parlade, 2016) and is now in its fifth decade of waging war against the Philippine government (International Crisis Group, 2011). According to Sison (2019), the Founding Chairman of the Communist Party of the Philippines, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines conceived of the New People's Army as the main instrument for overthrowing the semi-colonial and semifeudal ruling system through protracted people's war per the people's democratic revolution against US imperialism and the local exploiting classes of big compradors and landlords in late 1969-1967. The Maoist-inspired Communist Party of the Philippines marks a long history of violence, terror, and instability in the archipelago causing thousands of casualties among Government troops, insurgents, and including civilians (Parlade, 2016). On Parlade's (2006) analysis, the communist view revolution is a stage-by-stage social process. The three stages are strategic defensive, strategic stalemate, and strategic offensive. At the strategic defense stage, the party, the guerillas, and the united front grow from small and weak to large and strong. At the strategic stalemate stage, the balance of forces is more or less even and the guerilla war becomes a conspicuous tug of war over strategic towns, cities, and large urban areas. Finally, the strategic offensive stage is characterized by a government that has been profoundly weakened and completely isolated, and forced to go on the strategic defensive. This means that the balance of forces has tilted in favor of the insurgents who have gained moral supremacy. Its primary task is to wage a protracted people's war (PPW). It is protracted because they organize that it will take time to build bases in the countryside before they can eventually take the cities and seize power (Santos, 2019).

Insurgency thrives on the social and economic issues of the people that the government fails to address and strong popular support is often seen in the countryside where government



presence is least felt. The track record of the New People's Army is stained over the years of its operation, the use of violence is always associated with insurgency. New People's Army's drastic means come worst to the execution of cattle rustlers, rapists, arsonists, bandits, and murderers (Parlade, 2016). The NPA has already spread nationwide and is deeply rooted among the toiling masses. It occupies most of the terrains favorable for guerrilla warfare. It takes full advantage of the strategic line of encircling the cities from the countryside as well as orchestrating tactical offensives in an archipelago according to the principle of centralized leadership and decentralized operations (Sison, 2019).

Communist Party of the Philippines central leadership shifted to Isabela from late 1970 to 1972. The focus of the most frequent and most successful tactical offensives shifted from one region to another, from 1972 to 1975, it was Isabela, Ifugao, Quirino, Aurora, Pampanga, Bataan, Quezon, Camarines Sur, Albay, Sorsogon, Negros, and Panay provinces. However, the NPA in Isabela stagnated and weakened because of the error of staying too long in the unpopulated forest region from 1974 to 1976, despite the order of the central leadership to the regional Party committee in 1974 for shifting the NPA companies to Cagayan province. But the containment of the NPA in Isabela was countervailed by its growth elsewhere in Cagayan Valley, Northern Luzon, and in the entire country (Sison, 2019). Reports from local Radio Station shows that NPA's are active in Isabela particularly in the town of Jones. Often disturbing local radio news involves threes with the uniformed personnel of the Government that claimed lives of the army and the insurgents.

The local and international media was bombarded by what seems to be the most perturbing NPA's alleged activity of burning the Vote Counting Machine during elections (Marquez, 2019) and several hostile encounters that resulted in casualties (Estolas, 2019). These unsettling events were all pointed to the NPA's within a common setting—Jones Isabela. Some of these catastrophic events however were repudiated by the insurgents, Fortunato Camos Command of NPA Cagayan Valley has further denied being involved with the VCM burning and stated that the allegation was to conceal the negligence of government troops in ensuring safety during elections (Marquez, 2019).

The group is now estimated to have under 5,000, possibly as few as 3,000 members (Dalumpines, 2015), but the numbers themselves say little about why and where the group continues to endure (Prasad, 2010). The Media and the government are very well pronounced in their versions of the narrative. Some instances prove that not all disturbing occurrences pointed to the New People's Army residing in Jones Isabela are accounted to them. Whether these are the acts of insurgence by the New People's Army or other parties, doubts remain until the other side of the anecdote is unveiled. It is far better to negotiate than to wage an unwinnable war or wait for the organization to disintegrate over time (International Crisis Group, (2011). Therefore, the core of this study is knowing the realities in the lives of the New People's army residing in Jones, Isabela.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

The study is intended to explore the realities in the lives of the New People's Army in Jones, Isabela, specifically, it seeks to know their views and experiences on the life-threatening situation.

2. Materials and Methods

The researcher utilized the phenomenological method as a strategy of inquiry in this qualitative study. It is the most applicable method to be used as it seeks to obtain precise information from the participants through interpreting, understanding, and documenting the lived-experiences of the New People's Army in Jones Isabela.

2.1. Participants

The researcher interviewed 5 New People's Army participants from Jones Isabela using the purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, is a form of non-probability sampling in which researchers rely on their



judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in their study. Since the researchers have prior knowledge about the purpose of their studies, the method employed enabled them to properly choose and approach eligible participants. Researchers use purposive sampling when they want to access a particular subset of people, as all participants of a study are selected because they fit a particular profile.

2.2. Research Instrument

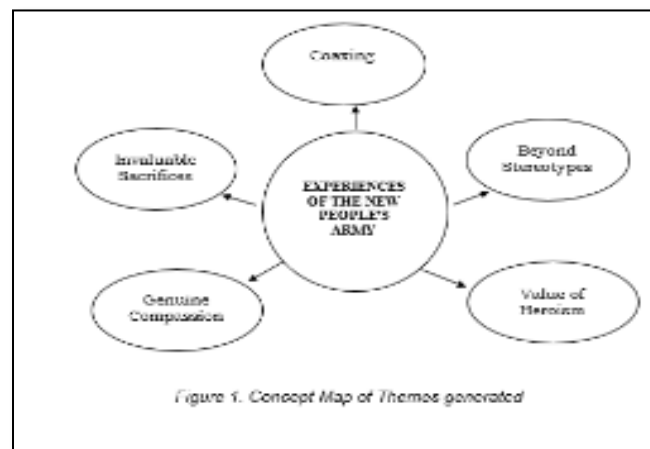
An open-ended interview was administered in gathering primary data from the informants as this allows them to discuss their views, opinions, and experiences in full detail. The interview was recorded with the permission of the interviewee and was replayed for analytical purposes. The recorded interview was transcribed in a verbatim manner where gestures, facial expressions, and non-verbal actions were taken in the note to fully describe their emotions and opinions with the given phenomenon.

2.3. Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection for qualitative research was subjective and entails the researchers positioning themselves as a visible, direct observer, interviewing participants regarding the experiences and biases. Informants have been reminded of their right to terminate the interview at any time before commencing the session. The researcher has secured a setting that will allow the participants to feel at ease and comfortable in relaying critical information regarding the communist party. Data has been transcribed from the interviews verbatim and analysis of the transcripts carried out by the researcher while utilizing the seven-step approach to descriptive data analysis. Volumes of data were gathered throughout the data collection process which required the researcher to complete a reduction in data through categorizing and identifying similar themes. After the interview was conducted, the results were processed through NVivo by authorized persons to ensure the validity and relevance of the data gathered.

3. Results and Discussion

The following context is the generated themes from the transcribed interviews using the NVivo Software. A concept map is presented for a clearer view of the result. literature citations are presented as well to affirm the framework of the themes generated;



Theme #1: Coaxing the People

The informants of the study reiterated that one of their experiences and activities initiated by them is coaxing. Thus, the following statements were verbalized by the informants, to wit:

“Syempre, namamasyal sila sa mga barangay at, nagbibigay sila ng pangaral sa barangay noon, ngayon ginawa nila kaming mga pasabiles noong panahon nayon...”



The context of the above activities of the New People's Army was supported by Spottswood (1988), wherein in his paper assumed that wars of national liberation are Marxist-Leninist revolutions. As such, the aim is always ideological and political-total control by the revolutionaries. According to Mao, politics and war are two sides of the same coin, both are forms of struggle with the same driving purpose particularly coaxing.

Theme #2: Genuine Compassion:

The informants' statements coincide that they have witnessed genuine compassion towards each member of the organization as well as compassion for the common people and vice versa. Wherefore, the succeeding statements were articulated by the participants:

One of the informants shared experiencing compassion from the people inside the organization even before them joining, thus the informant said that:

“Ang nais lang naman nila—makatulong sa lahat--parang yung mga kabataan, kababaihan, hindi naman—kumabaga parang sa isang kooperatiba—kumbaga ba parang ganon. Nang upang sa ganon ay—gumanda ang buhay ninyo, ganon, magkaisa kayo—ganon... Maganda talaga ang kanilang mga kagustuhan nila, kaya nga syempre ang mga tao naman, dahil nga sa wala naman silang pinapakitang hindi maganda, marespeto naman sila- tapos kapag may gawain sa—maabutan ka nilang nagtatrabaho sa mga “kuman” mo, tumutulong naman sila sayo, saka ang pakisama kasi nila ay makatao... Parang mapapalapit naman ang damdamin mo sa kanila.”

On the other hand, not only did the informants experience the same values from comrades inside the organization, but also experiencing the same sympathy from the people who supports them even without being one of the parties.

The theme derived from these experiences of the New People's Army of Jones was affirmed by Prilleltensky (2003), in times of most severe cases of oppression, in these circumstances that people demonstrate remarkable solidarity and compassion. Similarly, in the context of the insurgents, they tend to ignore what they have to give off for their commitment to servitude, furthermore, the reason why people support the insurgents is precisely that terms strive to capture genuine aspirations of people seeking peace and freedom that persons are often in sympathy with the struggle and the ideals, just beneath the surface of all insurgency issues runs this undercurrent of concern for the human condition, hence this entails that the people support the insurgents as they somehow share their ideas and aspirations.

Theme #3: Invaluable Sacrifices

The informants shared their unyielding determination in upholding their membership and experienced multitudinous tribulation which held them to endure sacrifices, one of the informants shared how they have endured constantly fleeing to avoid encounters with the soldiers, it is also noteworthy that the insurgents are selfless warriors as they are prepared to be scathed without any gains from the bargain.

The abovementioned activities by the insurgents were underpinned by the study of Tompkins (2012), according to the study, the New People's army framed commitment to one's family interests above that of “service to the people”. The NPA employed seminars, songs, dances, and plays, performed by their youth groups to emphasize the need for sacrifice to achieve the ultimate liberation of the people. Indeed, these values have been effectively instilled in the New People's Army in Jones Isabela that they willingly bear the risk of suffering throughout their lives as communists.



Theme #4: Beyond stereotypes

The informants shared that unlike the common perception of people towards the communist party, unprecedented human kindness, and true beatitude is experienced by the members from within, and evidently, the NPA's of Jones harbors a remarkable degree of devotion to their mission.

The succeeding narrations of experiences of the New People's Army were being substantiated by the Self Categorization Theory, Turner (2011), the theory posits that a person might act as a unique personality in one context, but display collective similarities as a group member in another. Human beings are good at the varying degree to which they act in terms of either individual differences or collective similarities. The theory explains individuality and group behavior in terms of the way people define and perceive themselves. It focuses on what is called self-concept, the collection of identities, definitions, descriptions, categories, concepts that people use to define and experience themselves. The theory assumes that people define themselves differently in situations and that the way they categorize themselves will influence how they will react to situations. This further explains the unprecedented events displayed by the communist that is beyond the perception of the majority.

Theme#5: The Value of Heroism

The informants relayed that they are aware and prepared for their possible demise in their journey of upholding their beliefs and principles for they believe that the essence of the group is to serve and fight for the right of the people, hence these characteristics best describe the value of heroism. The researchers employed deeper inquiry as to why they possess such value, whereas the following statements were to prove their heroism for the people:

*kahit na—mamamatay kami dahil diyan o kahit maghirap ang adhikain naming
ay parang magpakabayani ganon*

The conditions experienced by the New People's Army are heroic as corroborated by Becker & Eagly (2004), in their published article, they stated that heroes are those individuals who choose to take the risks on behalf of one or more other people, despite the possibility of dying or suffering serious physical consequences from these actions.

4. Conclusion

The study revealed that the New People's Army in Jones Isabela has been present for a long time and were employed to the organization during the first decades of the Communist Party of the Philippines, furthermore, their journey of survival against persecutions was a tough wander. The study divulges through the life experiences of these communists and conveyed that they are prepared for any life-threatening instances, they are conditioned to the idea of liberty-deprivation and the possibility of losing life along the way of strenuous fights they have to participate to uphold their beliefs, ideologies and instilled communism doctrines. On the other hand, despite their distressful experiences against the government, the study shows that they don't receive resentment from the community as their community recognizes them as people who have great value of patriotism and compassion to their countrymen, even more so, these communist exhibits the remarkable value of heroism that despite not gaining anything in return for their sacrifices, they continue to uphold their ideologies and aspirations. Lastly, the New People's Army of Jones Isabela still stands on the pillar of their organization from which it has originated.



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